

Megiddo Message

DEVOTED TO THE CAUSE OF CHRIST

Salvation, Life's Highest Goal

HOW TO REST ON A WINDY NIGHT

THERE IS A SILVER LINING

A LETTER TO THE LAODICEANS

MEDITATIONS ON THE WORD

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

COURAGE

Megiddo Message

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Kenneth E. Flowerday, Acting Editor
A religious magazine, devoted to the cause of Christ and published for the dissemination of Bible truth alone. The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will

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- Answer perplexing religious questions
- Give you courage for these uncertain times
- Help you live above the world's moral corruption
- Reveal to you how to develop a character acceptable to God
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Salvation, Life's Highest Goal

TO A CHRISTIAN, one whose pattern and ideal is the Christ of Galilee—salvation is the apex, the pinnacle, the zenith of his ambition. Like our Saviour, who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, we too should long to escape the trouble, the disappointments, the pains and aches, the limited life span, the uncertainties, the frustrations, and the limitations associated with our mortal existence. We should long to be saved for time and eternity, to have our mortal corruptible bodies changed and made like unto the glorious body of our Redeemer and King, who now is seated upon His Father's throne in heaven. And indeed, that is the Bible promise. Paul the apostle, when picturing the reward for right doing, said: "For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."

And Jesus, in rebuttal of the proposition presented by the Sadducees, who were trying to discredit the idea of a resurrection from the dead and future rewards, said: "Those who are accounted worthy to attain to that age and to the resurrection from the dead . . . cannot die any more, because they are equal to angels and are the sons of God, being sons of the resurrection."

Must Doing Good Be Its Own Reward?

It has become popular among theologians to discredit the idea of an eternal salvation, or the hope of eternal rewards to be given at the resurrection of the just. It is their considered opinion that salvation is not life's highest goal, that right living should bring its own rewards in peace of mind and satisfaction, as one passes through life, and nothing more can be expected. But Almighty God offers more than that, much more!

Increased service for God, increased interest in the welfare of our brother, a higher standard of moral excellence, are sufficiently worthy ambitions to attract a man who appreciates virtue, however they are not incentives strong enough to impel a man or woman to go the whole way, and perform the entire will of God. Our aim should be to be saved for eternity, to be made equal to the angels never to die. Salvation is the highest goal in the Christian's life, and the only incentive strong enough to lead a reasoning man or woman to renounce everything of the flesh, to take up his or her daily cross of self-denial, and die with Christ to the rudiments of the world, to have no confidence in the flesh or surrender to any of its bewitching desires. It was for the joy set before Jesus that He "endured the cross, despising the shame," and it is the hope of eternal salvation that will urge you and me on to make a full and complete surrender.

Shall We Believe the Supernatural?

Many people today are inclined to discredit Jesus' miracles, and the other supernatural phenomena reported in the Bible. It is hard for them to accept the belief in angels, the resurrection of the body or a future life. But the Bible is verbal on each of these matters. We have be-

come a nation of doubters. What we cannot see and demonstrate, and explain from a scientific point of view we are apt to discredit, hence we have no patience with the person who believes in the supernatural. But let us not be too certain that we are right. The scientific marvels of today which are the common knowledge of the grade-school pupil, would have seemed supernatural phenomena to the people living one hundred years ago, or even fifty years ago.

Today only the most irresponsible bigot would take the position that all discoveries have been made, that science could proceed no further. We admit there is much more to be learned, and that given time science will discover much more. Granted that this is the case, why rule out the possibility of the existence of a super-race of beings in other parts of the limitless universe with powers away beyond ours?

A rocket that is powerful enough, and accurate enough to send a satellite into orbit, is a remarkable device, but we know very well that it did not devise, design, and build itself. It is the product of beings intellectually superior to itself. Likewise a human being is a remarkable creation, but not the highest creation in the universe. We are the product of a still higher creation. Behind the remarkable phenomenon we call Nature there is a super intelligence which we call God. And the phenomenon that seems so remarkable to us is mere routine work to the super-race of people living on the other side of the intellectual curtain.

Hence our only conclusion can be, there is a God by whose infinite powers the universe exists and is maintained, and under His magnanimous influence is a race of supermen and women to whom the Scriptures refer as angels. It is no stretch of our imagination to conceive of the existence of such immortal beings. We cannot conceive of a divine Creator living in complete isolation, or among a society of inferior human beings. The presence of angels on earth is reported frequently throughout the Bible, testifying to their existence. Angels appeared to Abraham, to Lot, to King David, to Daniel who was among the captives in Babylon. One of these angelic visitants is even known to us by name. The angel Gabriel appeared to Daniel, then some five hundred years later appeared to Zacharias, to inform him of the birth of a son, John the Immerser, then again a few months later Gabriel came to inform Mary of Christ's birth to her.

Christ foretold that He would come in His glory and all His holy angels with Him. And the book of Hebrews, speaking of the rapturous event awaiting worthy Christians when given their reward of immortality at Christ's coming, says: "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, and to an innumerable company of angels" (Heb. 12: 22). Angels are real.

Angels, the Subjects of Salvation

Now these heavenly angels are not ultra favored beings who began their life as such. They are men and women who once lived as lowly mortal creatures even as we. They were the winners in the struggle against flesh, they be-

came pure and holy like their heavenly Father, and so merited eternal salvation. Let us quote again those words of Jesus in Luke 20: 35, 36, "But they that shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead," are equal unto the angels, neither can they die any more, "and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." And Paul's words in Phil. 3: 20, 21 will also bear repeating: "Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." Again the words of John in I John 3: 2 apply: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." Furthermore, the road to this delightful realization is open to each of us today. We can gain that full salvation for our very own if only we behave ourselves as Christians should.

God's Family in Heaven

Paul spoke sublimely of God's long-range plan of salvation in Eph. 3: 14 to end of chapter: "For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; . . . that, ye, . . . may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding, abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us."

A mere glimpse into the glories of such an abundant life should be sufficient to convince us that we want that life. That is the effect the hope of salvation had on prophets and the holy men of old. Peter said: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold which perisheth, . . . might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: . . . receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently" (I Pet. 1: 7-10).

Three Steps to Salvation

But the question naturally poses itself, How shall we come into possession of this glorious salvation? Good things in life do not come to us merely for their taking, there is always a price to pay. And should we picture God, with the greatest of all boons to offer, as so philanthropic as to offer it with no strings of any kind attached? No indeed! Salvation is conditional. "If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land" (Isa. 1: 19). "If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be steadfast, and shalt not fear. . . . And thou shalt be secure because there is hope," said the Patriarch Job (Job 11: 14, 15, 18). And Jesus, in His post-ascension message to the seven churches, and to us, said, "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22: 12).

Knowledge, the First Step

The Apostle Paul was not unfamiliar with the sports events so popular with the ancient Greeks; the Olympic games, the foot races, and other types of physical prowess. They were not hit and miss affairs, but running on the race course was serious business. The runner wanted to win, and to win he must qualify in a number of different ways. The first of these was to inform himself of the rules of the race. The earnest seeker after salvation must also learn the rules of the race. The Apostle Peter gives us one of these rules in the opening paragraph of his second Epistle: "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." And Peter's able colleague, Paul, said the same thing to Timothy his son in the faith: "Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth, . . . for from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation."

Jesus already had taken this position regarding the need for knowledge of the rules of the race during His earthly ministry, and the Prophet Isaiah had taken it before Him, in fact Jesus quoted Isaiah: "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6: 44, 45). Hearing and learning of the Father is a prerequisite to coming to Jesus or running the race for life. Hence the first step toward salvation is knowledge. We now have established the need for rules, and have gained some insight into the nature of these rules.

Application, the Second Step

Now let us apply these rules. Jesus said: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." A realization of the fact that we are headed toward salvation should make us happy, and that realization stems only from obeying the words of Jesus. Knowing, without doing, is like a tree that bears leaves but no fruit. Knowing makes doing possible; doing brings results, fits one for salvation.

No man ever cherished a greater desire for eternal salvation—after the way was opened up to him—than did the Apostle Paul. His enthusiasm was like a burning flame that nothing could quench. To read his record is to view a runner flashing over his course, bounding past every obstacle as though given fresh impetus from every would-be difficulty. Shipwreck him on an island, and he will preach the gospel to the native dwellers; thrust him into the inner prison with his feet in the stocks, and at midnight, with his companion he will sing praises to God; let the mob stone him, drag him out of the city for dead, and the very next day he is revived and on the way to the next site of his evangelistic endeavor; let him be bound, and taken with a horde of common prisoners to Rome to be tried before the brutal Nero, and while held under house-arrest awaiting his trial, he preaches the gospel to all who come to him, and writes to his newly organized churches some of his most stirring and gripping Epistles.

This Paul was a one-idea man. He said: "This one thing

I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. . . . Neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus" (Phil. 3: 13, 14; Acts 20: 24).

Furthermore, Paul was a realist. Let us note his attitude toward his own salvation, his alertness to the possibility of his losing the race: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (I Cor. 9: 24—27). *Salvation is life's highest goal, and to attain the perfection of character that assures salvation, life's greatest achievement.*

Salvation is a personal matter. Much stress has been laid upon the redemptive work of Christ and its virtue toward our salvation. But it is only a vain delusion to suppose that God will do for us anything that we can do for ourselves. Paul's words in Phil. 2: 12 strike home like an arrow to the mark: "Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." To work out our own salvation merely means to banish from our lives all malice, all pride, hypocrisy, deceit, and lying, all anger; to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh, perfecting holiness in God's fear.

In Matt. 5: 8 Jesus said: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." And he was teaching the same truth when He spoke the parable of the wise and foolish builders: "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it" (Matt. 7: 25—27).

God Wants Quality

God will not perpetuate any unworthy thing. His promise is eternal life, everlasting salvation. Should He let down the bars and accept of any sub-standard material, He would be perpetuating eternally that which is evil. Should He save one person with a little anger in his makeup, another with a little jealousy, another with a little pride, another who would tell an occasional lie, the inhabitants of that better world could borrow and trade and swap evil traits, and soon all the evils of the world of today would be represented. God's only safe plan is to demand absolute purity of heart. That is His unalterable demand and He cannot change. "God is not a man that he should lie."

God has His own ideas about whom He chooses to save.

When issuing the loving invitation He did not say: All the wealthy may come, or all the poor may come. He did not say that all the people that have at least three years in college may come, but "whosoever will may come," but too often we have refused His loving invitation, our attitude has been that of a class to whom Jesus spoke in His day, "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." Coming to Jesus is not as simple as walking down the aisle of a church or "hitting the trail." To come to Jesus is first to hear and learn of the Father, then to do the things the Father wants us to do each moment of each day. God wants character, He is a "God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed" (I Sam. 2: 3). "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city" (Prov. 16: 32).

Pay Day, the Third Step

Pay day comes with the arrival of the Paymaster. When building the transcontinental railroads in the last half of the nineteenth century much of the work was done by man power, hence many men were employed. Often the railroads preceded civilization, hence there were long stretches where there were no towns or cities; no banks, no post offices. Therefore the railroads were obliged to send a guarded pay car over a section of the road to take care of their payroll. The workers were paid in gold. No worker could get his pay until the pay car arrived, no worker expected to get his pay until the pay car went through. Now that is the way it is with salvation. Christ is the great Paymaster. No one will get his reward until He comes to bring it to him. Jesus spoke in a straight forward manner when He said: "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev. 22: 12). There are no exceptions, behold I come to give every man according as his works shall be. No one can obtain salvation until Jesus comes to bring it.

One time Jesus was impressing a lesson upon that class of people who always wanted to drive a shrewd bargain, who wanted to be repaid for every effort they made to help their fellow men. He said: "But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind; and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just" (Luke 14: 13, 14). There is the pay day projected, the time when salvation will be given to all worthy of it—"at the resurrection of the just."

Peter was with his Lord during His earthly ministry. More than once he heard Him say, I am going away, and I will come again, and he left these words on record for us: "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (I Pet. 5: 4). When the chief Shepherd "shall appear," not the moment of one's death, but when Jesus, the chief Shepherd shall appear salvation will be given. And to make assurance doubly sure Peter added: "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace [reward] that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1: 13).

Indeed, salvation is the highest goal in the Christian's life, and once bestowed it will always endure, for "Israel shall be saved in the Lord their God with an everlasting salvation. Ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end."



How to Rest on a Windy Night

THERE is food for thought in the familiar tale concerning a letter of recommendation a certain farmer received about his new hired man. Among the worthwhile qualifications including his diligence and honesty was this sentence: "Furthermore, this man knows how to sleep on a windy night." The story goes on to relate how the farmer forgot this comment until one night great gales began to sweep the countryside. A mighty storm was brewing. The farmer went to rouse his hired man that they might prepare the property to receive the blow. But to no avail. Only peaceful snores answered the farmer's increasingly annoyed shouts and shakings. So the owner himself hurried forth to do the job, fully decided to discharge so unconcerned a helper before breakfast!

And lo! there was no need; all was as it should have been. All gates were closed, all doors latched, all machinery under cover, and everything movable tied down.

Now as the owner marveled at such foresight and thoroughness on the part of his hired man, he remembered the singular praise of the fellow's sleeping powers and there flashed on him the reason why.

As laborers for Christ, are we every day seeing that our work is done well? The testing comes soon or late to all of us. God tests every one of his employes to see that their work is well done. When the night descends and the storm clouds gather we shall be in for trouble unless we have done our very best. If we have done that we can rest content no matter what comes. If we have closed the gates and locked the doors to shut out all that is of the world, and the lower nature, and keep in our Father's fold we shall have no fear when the whirlwind of God's judgments sweeps the chaff away like a rolling thing. Our work must be in an acceptable condition before the storm breaks for then it will be too late to work. Instead of rest and comfort as a result of work well done we shall be in torment, knowing all too well what we should have done and could have done.

"I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest" said one of old.

A storm for the latter days was predicted ages ago by Daniel, Isaiah, Jesus and others. The Prophet Daniel's forecast describes it as worse than any storm on record: "A time of trouble such as never was." Are we doing our work for the Lord well so we can rest with confidence when that storm breaks?

There have been local storms of God's dealing with His

children at various intervals, and at such locations as Sodom and Gomorrah, Jerusalem and elsewhere. But this future storm is authoritatively predicted to be world-wide.

God is now pleading with us to hasten our escape from all that would hinder our onward progress. He sent the prophets and apostles to warn us, and His own Son to set the example of escape. He did not linger on the plain of sin. Today He has given us pastors and teachers, urging us to keep on the move up the mountain of holiness, out of the lowlands where the storm will beat with violence and twist and break every tree and twig that is not living and strong.

Before the storm strikes there is ample warning given to seek cover and protection. God sent His personal messengers to Lot—angels—to help him make his escape before the fiery storm that laid Sodom in ruins. That just man hearkened to these kindly warnings and made his escape on time, while the multitude derided and would have deposed his heavenly guests. Even his wife who started to make her escape became entangled with the affections of this life and overcome, and that after being in the angel's presence. She had the same warnings and the same help while passing through the same trial as did Lot. But these things that brought deliverance to Lot brought destruction to his wife. He set his heart to a noble purpose and allowed nothing to turn him from it. He prepared for the storm.

Long before the storm that destroyed Jerusalem and the tempest broke, the warning signals were flying. Those who obeyed these divine warnings were safe, while other thousands perished, as a result of the storm and disregarding its warning.

Today we hear the ominous thunder roar as we approach this most violent of all storms. Are we running at top speed, flying to the strong tower God set up for deliverance where we can rest in safety?

The flag has been hoisted, indicating the storm is on its way, the warnings we are receiving are frequent and urgent. Are we paying the closest of attention, giving strict heed so that we do not, like Lot's wife, look back in this critical hour to anything that we have left behind? We cannot use our full energy to escape if our mind is not all bent in that one direction. If we have done our work well during this day of salvation then when the stormy night comes we can rest in perfect peace within God's strong tower of safety.

There is a Silver Lining

WE HEAR and read so much of the stress and strain, the tension of modern life. One serious thinker observes that many "drink of the waters of Lethe, seeking in forgetfulness, if they can gain it, to find oases of distraction where they can forget the arid wastes of harassed and monotonous lives." This, he says, must explain why the moving picture houses and game stadiums are filled. Anything that will distract harried minds seems to be the great hunger of the American people.

We are made aware of the mental state of the masses as they grope in darkness, many of them serious and intelligent people, who are fear-smitten and depressed because of the seeming hopelessness and vanity of life or the world's dark outlook. This all brings to mind the sore need of true optimism to carry one past the darkness to the glorious dawn just ahead. We know also from experience that adult life is no gay lissom song, but very serious business. However, the wonderful truth which we possess, if applied to our lives, should enable us to tread the dark path, sail the stormy sea, free from the fears and doubts, the feeling of insecurity and uncertainty caused by the world chaos harassing the world around us. We profess Christ, and He was an optimist of the highest order.

Optimism defined is the doctrine that everything is ordered for the best, that the universe is constantly tending toward a better state. The whole Bible from cover to cover states and supports the doctrine that every year hastens the era of Divine government on earth, and the return of the Prince of Peace to inaugurate it. "For evil doers shall be cut off: but they that wait upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth." Then "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea."

Christ knew that this earth would eventually be filled with righteousness, all evil doers destroyed, and that he would be its King forever. Our Saviour prayed, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." Such a blissful state was the Divine plan from its creation, so Christ knew that all would work to this end. Not that the masses would be getting better morally—no, no; for except God intervene, they are doomed to self-annihilation, as their own critics admit. But "thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited." Those who survive the judgments of God, the destruction of all workers of iniquity, will be a better race, in the end even an immortal race enjoying peace and joy, expanding in mind, activity and accomplishment, glorifying the Eternal God forever and ever. That will be a better state.

It was the knowledge of the Divine plan concerning the destiny of earth and the laws which ruled his life that gave Christ that inner calm, peace, strength, and courage to bring to a triumphant close his short, unparalleled career and fit him for our future King and Ruler. "For the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame." He saw the brighter side in His personal problems as well as of the world's affairs. As our Great Light-bearer finished His race, with a touch of His light He lit the torch of our lives that even we might run

the course through the darkness by the light of His light.

"In the world ye shall have tribulation," He said, "be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." And we read He was tempted in all points even as we. But He always saw the brighter side of things, and He endeavored to fire His followers with His optimism. "Ye shall be sorrowful," He said, "but your sorrow shall be turned into joy."

We need optimism in our spiritual life and in our daily affairs. Too often we sink to the level of murmuring, complaining, looking on the gloomy side of life. We are so apt to think there never was a load like the one we carry, but really, to use the words of the poet—

"Ill fate has no monopoly, there is no copyright on care,
Nor patent on adversity, for trouble is a thing we share.
We have, but never have it all, though we may think at times
we do,
And yet the same the shadows fall on others as on me and you.

"Too many times our lot we blame on fate, or on *somebody else*.
Each morn each mortal may arise, and strive to do, and seek
to find;
For nothing says we can't be wise.
And no one says we can't be kind; and whether each shall be
his best,
Or live his worst the poorest way, is not a matter for the rest,
Is something for *each one* to say."

And herein lies one of the secrets of being a cheery, hopeful, ever-shining lamp. Often when we cannot change the circumstances or other people as we would like, one thing we *can* do, we can *change ourselves*. Instead of giving way to ill-temper, self-pity, murmuring, complaining, gloom or despair, we can be radiant by faith, hope and charity or the keeping of God's commandments. Remember the old natural vessels leak and will not hold this oil of truth. We must *change for a new vessel* that will.

I must not fail to mention the constant fretters and worriers. The constant visualizing of some misfortune, financial or otherwise, that would threaten our health or happiness until we are over-anxious about the material future, is a sin. It creates fear that weakens and can do no good. It means destruction of nervous energy, vacillation, takes what we have now and might have later. Worry means waste, reacts upon the heart, diminishes energy of body and mind, *exhausts* its victims and *gives nothing*.

Let us practice to see the good in everything. World conditions, though deplorable for the present, are wonderful signs to every Christian. Jesus said, "When ye see these things begin to come to pass, then look up, lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." In our private lives very often, as says the poet,

"It all depends
Less on the thing than on the taking.
Some see the night when evening ends,
Some see a morning in the making.

"It all depends
Less on the thing than on our taking.
To some the radiance never ends,
To some the sun is always sinking."

We all need to look close to see what are the things that cause us the most anxiety—are they spiritual or material?

And it were well to follow the prophet who said, "Acquaint now thyself with him and be at peace. Receive, I pray thee, the law from his mouth, and lay up his words in thine heart. If thou return to the Almighty thou shalt be built up, thou shalt *put away iniquity far from thy tabernacles*. Yea, the Almighty shall be thy *gold*, and thou shalt have silver of strength" (margin). Then we shall see the brighter side of things.

Paul manifested this disposition, according to II Cor. 4:8. Of some dark hours he wrote, "At all points we are hard pressed, yet not hemmed in; perplexed, yet not at our wits' end; pursued, yet not forsaken; struck down, yet not destroyed." For every dark cloud, Paul saw a silver lining, and kept as his watchword: "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

We read also from Paul "Not only so, but we triumph even in our troubles, knowing that trouble produces endurance, endurance produces character, and character produces hope, a hope which never disappoints us" (Rom. 5:3, 4, Moffatt).

How many of us feel like Paul in this? Do we know that to be rubbed by trial is to shine the brighter, to radiate more of God's light? And if we are chosen material, do we keep in mind that if we do not shine we will be rubbed until we do? Paul felt that a hard spiritual task was a chance to grow, an opportunity for a courageous soul, a compliment from God. And if like him, we know there is compensation in every trial if we make it serve a great purpose and compel it to yield up its lesson. Let us learn to bear our trials better, nobler, knowing that we are richer for every difficulty faced and vanquished, for every wild impulse we conquer within our own mind. Let us find the bright side of every cloud, wear it inside out to show the silver lining.

There are many examples of Christians who looked down through the long ages and saw afar off the Kingdom of God with its order of peace and righteousness and let its light lead them ever on, past all the obstacles of sin and darkness. The optimism that illuminated them will make us more obedient to the holy commandments, more humble, give us more faith and trust, enable us to be calm in adversity, at all times happy and content. Our minds will be vibrantly awake and we will possess all the marvelous qualities of self-mastery. Then we can look with joy for the return from heaven of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

"Although His coming will cause a terrific storm to burst on this benighted world and rock it to and fro, causing it to shake and be convulsed from center to circumference; yet after this terrific storm, which is absolutely necessary to destroy and work off the impurity which has been gathering for centuries, bright will be the glory, calm and serene the heavens that will *forever* cover the earth, and sweet will be the eternal and peaceful repose that will settle upon its then made beautiful hills."

And we, if faithful, will be rewarded for our true optimism. That which we had seen by faith we may in reality see, taste, and enjoy forever—the silver lining to the world's dark cloud.

To admit that you were wrong may mean that you are wiser today than you were yesterday.

A Letter to the Laodiceans

ONE of the richest blessings humanity experiences today is the writings of the holy men of old which are preserved for us. It is these writings which have taught men the will of God and have moved them to do deeds in His name which have made the world a more livable place.

God caused His words to be recorded that we too may benefit from them. Not only is this benefit for the immediate present but much more for the time to come—eternity. If we study and observe the contents of what has been written for us we will profit greatly.

In Revelation 2 and 3 there are recorded special messages written by the Apostle John to the seven Churches in Asia. They were messages from God, given through Jesus Christ. Things were not what they should have been in those churches, so warnings were sent to them. Let us examine the last of these letters for our own benefit.

This letter is addressed to the "angel of the church of the Laodiceans." Now, this "angel" was not an immortal being from the high courts of Heaven. He was the man in charge of that church, a minister who was teaching that church the truths of God. We do not know his name, but it might have been Archippus of whom we read in Col. 4:16, 17, whom Paul admonished to take heed and fulfill the ministry he had received of the Lord. The message is very likely to the whole congregation rather than merely to the minister.

The first thing the Lord commanded John to write this church was that they were neither cold nor hot; that they were lukewarm. They were not growing spiritually. Either they were slipping from the better soul-condition they once possessed, or they had grown only to a certain point and then stalled.

Today there is no word in the English language so stinging as to call a professing Christian a Laodicean, for the term "Laodicean" has become a synonym for lukewarm Christians. Now there is good reason for us to consider our own life and see whether it is comparable to that of the lukewarm Laodiceans. How is it with us? have we gone a certain distance in this way of Life and then, because of some obstacle, have stopped our forward progress? Are we waiting for some miraculous flame of zeal to warm us up? You can read in John's letter the fate of those who are lukewarm when Christ returns.

Lukewarmness brings another detestable spiritual condition. Those Laodiceans said—not by words but by their behavior—that they were rich and in need of nothing; but they knew not that by the Lord's standard they were wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. What a condition! What ever was the matter with them? We are not told details; but let us look into our own hearts and we may find the answer.

Are we neglecting our reading of the Word and meditating thereon, and instead are wasting our time heedlessly? In singing hymns of praise and devotion, is our heart in it? How about our private prayers? Do we fulfill our duty in edifying our brethren as we should? Are we trying to serve God and mammon? Is our loyalty divided, trying to serve God and also to get all we can out of this life? Are we letting the cares of life overcome us? Or are we casting longing glances at the things we left behind? If we look honestly we cannot fail to detect the

true feelings of our hearts and know where we stand. It was just some of these tests that revealed the lukewarmness of the Laodiceans. And if we do not see our true condition and work to correct it, those warning words of our Master may well apply to us.

Among the terrible things mentioned against these Laodiceans, their "nakedness" and the "shame of his nakedness" are surely the worst. In secular or personal affairs nothing is harder to bear than shame. Men would face anything rather than that. When the Bible speaks of shame, it is of the infinitely more terrible shame of the naked soul. Let us take this home to ourselves. Suppose our innermost soul were laid absolutely bare to our friends and neighbors. Suppose the secret thoughts we harbor were proclaimed from the housetop, so that the very people we were hiding them from were hearing them. Suppose our secret and malicious thoughts, our hatred and envy of this one and that, were suddenly disclosed. Suppose we had to face those shameful times when we feigned friendship while our hearts were bitter; or when we assented to certain principles or teachings when inwardly we felt and believed otherwise; or when we publicly spoke well of a rival and praised him while within was hatred and envy. Suppose, if you dare for one moment, that the whole bottomless pit of our naturally evil hearts were laid bare—exposing all . . .

It is such sins as these that threatened the case of the Laodiceans, and it is these things that trouble many who profess the way of Christ. They know principally what their trouble is but lack the will to press ahead and beyond the stalemate condition of their inner souls.

But the Lord counsels us to buy gold, and white raiment, and eyesalve, that we may be rich, and clothed, and that we may see. And to crown it all, in His mercy and compassion, He sends His kind invitation, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."

During their discipleship the apostles knew something of what it meant to dine with Jesus. They were often invited to dinner, and at such times Jesus was always master of the situation, for He would declare the Word of God and the right way to live with conviction and finality. Jesus uses the illustration of standing at the door and knocking, pleading for admission into the hearts of men. If we open our lives by repentance, Christ will come in and transform our life. If a man conceals his sin and does not confess it before the Lord, although he asks for mercy, the door will not be opened and the Lord will not bless him. Christ stands, He waits long at the sinner's hearts. He knocks, using judgments, mercies, reproofs, exhortations, etc., to induce us to repent and turn to Him. If we seriously hear and open the door—God will not force open the door of our hearts, we must open them—Christ will manifest Himself to us; He will heal our backslidings and pardon our iniquities, and bless us freely.

This letter to the Laodiceans closes, as do the letters to the other churches: "To him that overcometh. . . ." Yes, "to him that overcometh"—everything depends upon that. The churches in Asia had their own particular difficulties; but basically the problems were the same. Today we have our difficulties; you have yours, your brother and sister have theirs, and I have mine. The warning is sounded to us and the reward for repentance is offered. Shall we overcome?

You Can't Have Everything

Emerson has said: "God strikes a bargain with all. There is an absolute balance of give and take. Everything has its price, and if the price is not paid, not that thing, but something else is obtained." In other words you can't have everything.

Take climate, for example. The nipping air that brings the bloom to our eastern apples, forbids the growing of luscious oranges. Softer climes bring oranges, but breed also the alligator and the scorpion, which we in the north are spared.

The gaunt, rocky farms of New England have bred a sturdy, thrifty, hardy race of men, whose fame has gone to the ends of the earth. The soft airs of the tropics produce food without labor, but there is no strong, virile race there. Nature hates monopolies. You can't have everything.

Take life as another example. The average person thinks that power and privilege is a mighty fine thing. But the king or the president pays dearly for his position.

Ah, you say, the rich have everything. The kings and autocrats of this world have everything. Not so. The rich and powerful pay for their exaltation in responsibility, care and the suspicion and envy of their neighbors.

You can't have everything, but you can have a choice of things. Real wisdom is to make that choice willingly; to strike if possible a happy medium in the great scale of compensation; to live the balanced life.

For you can't have everything.

The Living Present

Before we ask the Lord for bigger blessings,

Let's pause a moment while we take account
Of those we have already—things familiar;
Surprisingly, there's quite a large amount.

Before we pray for happiness to find us,

(As though it lived in favored lands, afar,)
Let's open wide our eyes and look around us—
Stop reaching for that cold and distant star.

This air is here, but do we breathe it deeply?

Here, too, the sky; but do we look above?
The song-birds sing; how many of us listen?
And don't we take for granted those we love?

With burdened hearts, we pray for health or riches,

Or ask that grief and care be laid away;
And so concerned are we for our tomorrow,
We fail to live in fullness this today.

—Selected.

THE SWEETEST LIVES

The sweetest lives are those to duty wed,

Whose deeds, both great and small,
Are close-knit strands of an unbroken thread
Where love ennobles all.

The world may sound no trumpets, ring no bells,
The Book of Life the shining record tells.

—Sel.

Meditations

On the Word

"And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth" (Luke 11:2).

Human "interpreters" of the Scriptures have wrested this glorious doctrine of the Kingdom of God to their own destruction and that of millions of their deluded followers, by attaching to it meanings which the Almighty never intended or approved, and which do not even agree among themselves. To one class it is an invisible, spiritual influence in the hearts of men. To others it is the Church, which some claim was established on the day of Pentecost. To millions upon millions it means a powerful ecclesiastical hierarchy which affects all the outward trappings of royalty. Yet none of these even faintly resembles the Kingdom glimpsed through the Word of the living God.

The imperfect condition of the human heart, the Church with its many failures, do not bear the stamp of divinity. If this be the Kingdom of God, after nearly two thousand years of operation, then we may fairly question the wisdom and power of its King.

No, this is not the Kingdom. This is not what God intended. An enemy—sin—hath done this. The Christian doctrine does not make the facts, but only the Christian doctrine can explain them and point to something better ahead—the age-old hope of humanity to be realized at last. For the coming of the Kingdom of God is the one and only hope of the world; and in these perilous times it is a very immediate necessity.

Age after age, men have had the heartache of seeing hopes blasted, and fair schemes for the regeneration of the world knocked to pieces about the ears of their projectors, yet they hope on. Every period, as every man, has its times of credulity, its firm conviction that it has found the one thing needful, and the shout of Eureka goes up.

Alas! time after time the old experience is repeated, and the shouts die down into gloomy silence. Yet men hope on. What a strange testimony at once of the futility of all human effort and of the indestructible hope that men have that the world will be brighter and better some day, that undying expectation is!

God forbid that we should disparage these expectations. Men have given them false shapes, but through the mist and darkness the eye of faith can discern the great Reality. Anything savoring of hope in these dark and hopeless days should be encouraged, nurtured and directed toward truth and reality. We should never say, "It cannot be"; rather we are bound to say, "Yes, it is so, and we know how."

So much, then, the Prayer assumes: the certainty that the world is wrong; the certainty that the coming of the Kingdom—still future—is the only thing to set it right; the certainty that it can set it right; the certainty that it will. And, praise God, we have not been left to guess

at the *modus operandi*. We know how. The gospel of the coming Kingdom, the bright hopes of its eternal glories, will transform the lives of a choice few in this age, preparing them for positions of rulership in the new order of the ages; but the world at large can only be turned from its violently evil course by Divinely directed physical force, by the elimination of every person and every thing which stands in the way of the coming of the Kingdom. Not until Christ returns to take His throne will this conquest begin; not until a thousand years later shall the Kingdom be fully come, after a millennium of peace and righteousness has filled the earth with immortal subjects, the living glory of God.

The second part of our text, "Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth," continues the same thought to its ultimate perfection. For our planet there can be nothing higher than this. God's will or plan on earth is only according to His "eternal purpose." He has a "family" in His finished handiwork above, and now is taking out a family from humanity. Can we not bow in loving adoration to such a Mighty Being? The goodness of God *leads* us. We are not slaves of a Sovereign; we are sons of our Father. And it is as sons that our wills, gladly yielding, surrender in total self-abnegation to the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of our Father.

The only true obedience is that of intelligent beings who know God and can turn themselves to contemplate His will. So the reference is obviously to higher orders of beings, those immortal citizens who inhabit the myriads of glorified worlds in the far-flung heavenly Kingdom of God. These are the "innumerable company of angels," beings who have once been mortal, tried and tempted as we are, and who have entered into their reward. These are our examples, for us to emulate. "They which shall . . . obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead," said Jesus, "neither can they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels" (Luke 20:35, 36).

Since perfection of character is definitely our goal in our strivings toward that Kingdom, then these glorified spiritual beings must, as our examples, do it perfectly. There can be no interruption to it because of sin, no effort in it because of weakness, no resistance because of temptation, no flaw because of ignorance, no pause because of weariness, no pain because of rebellious will.

Note that it is not the knowledge, or the glory, or the blessedness of those immortals which is proposed for our example, but their service—their *doing* of the Divine will. This at once corrects those who think of the immortal life as one of idleness. There will always be work—thank God!

Then again, there is here the grand idea that the whole creation shall in that Day be bound into a unity by obedience to one will. We and they now form one whole, because we now serve the one Lord. And there comes a time when there shall be one Lord and His name one; when the curtain shall be lifted and another world adopted into the family of glorified spheres.

What glorious harmonies will sound then, when all cooperate with God and with one another, with eternity before us, and one purpose, and one will, and one love fills the whole creation! Earth will no longer be separated from heaven, but united with it, and from one extremity of creation to another shall be no creature which does not obey and rejoice.

Your Questions Answered



BIBLICAL PERSONAL CURRENT

Do you have a question? Personal replies to Biblical questions will be sent to any correspondent, and counsel will be offered on problems pertaining to the spiritual life. The MEGIDDO MESSAGE will publish only the most helpful discussions for the benefit of other readers. No names shall be mentioned.

What are the fruits of a Christian which Jesus spoke of in Matthew 7: 20?

The 20th verse is the summary of what Jesus had said in verses 16—19. "Ye shall know them by their fruits," was Jesus' way of telling us how we may identify the wolves, or the false prophets or teachers. Fruits, in Scripture and Jewish phraseology, are taken for works of any kind. A man's works are the tongue of his heart, and tell honestly whether he is inwardly corrupt or pure. By these works you may distinguish the ravenous wolves from the true pastors. The judgments formed of a man by his general conduct is a safe one. If the judgment be not favorable to the person, that is his fault, as you have your opinion of him from his works, which are the confession of his own heart.

As the thorn can only produce thorns, not grapes; and the thistle, not figs, but prickles; so an unregenerate heart will produce fruits of degeneracy. As we perfectly know that a good tree will not produce bad fruit, and the bad tree will not, rather, cannot, produce good fruits, so we know that the profession of godliness, while the life is ungodly, is imposture, hypocrisy, and deceit. A man cannot be a saint and a sinner at the same time.

Love to God and man are the foundation, or the chief fruits to which Jesus referred. These express themselves in numerous good ways. Paul enumerated some of them in his epistles. The fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5: 22—26) are some of the good fruits we must bear, so also are the virtues of charity, or love (I Cor. 13: 5—8). Fruits which identify the true Christian are also enumerated by Jesus in Matt. 25: 35—46, which see.

What is the meaning of Matthew 6: 12? What is the debt others might owe us?

This portion from the Lord's Prayer, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," is indeed a high principle. Because of our many sins we are represented here as under debt to God, and our sins are termed debts. God has made man that he might live to His glory. He has given him blessings beyond measure freely, but He has also given him law by which to walk. When man does anything that tends not to glorify God, or when he actually transgresses the law he contracts a debt with Divine Justice.

Man has nothing to pay to God for his debts. He may repent and sin no more but the debt would still remain if God did not forgive. Forgiveness therefore must come from the free mercy of God in Christ. While we pray God to forgive us, since God is indeed willing to do so upon our repentance (which if true includes turning away from sin, Isa. 55: 6, 7), Jesus teaches in the above passage that we must remember to forgive anyone who might have wronged us and against whom we may be harboring grudges. It was a maxim among the ancient Jews that no man should lie down in his bed without forgiving those

who had offended him. To make use of this portion of the Lord's Prayer with revenge and hatred in our hearts is to condemn ourselves.

(In connection with these thoughts the reader is requested to read and study the parable in Matt. 18: 23—35).

Verses 14, 15 must go along with the passage in question. He who shows mercy to men receives mercy from God. There is a difference in the Greek between the words "debts," and "trespasses." Men's sins against us are only their stumblings or failures in duties they owe us; but ours are debts to God's justice, which we can never discharge but must be forgiven.

The following lines are an excerpt from a writer of two centuries ago, and are good on the subject: "Athenoforus, the philosopher, by reason of his old age, begged leave to retire from the court of Augustus, which the emperor granted. In his compliments of leave, he said, 'Remember, Caesar, whenever thou art angry, that thou say or do nothing before thou hast distinctly repeated to thyself the twenty-four letters of the alphabet.' On which Caesar caught him by the hand, and said, 'I have need of thy presence still:' and kept him a year longer. This was excellent advice from a heathen; but a Christian may prescribe to himself a wiser rule. When thou art angry, answer not till thou hast repeated the fifth petition of our Lord's prayer—Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors: and our Lord's comment upon it—For if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses."

Who are those who can cast out devils and do many wonderful works in Jesus' name, as per Matthew 7: 22?

The scene is the Judgment. Jesus is on His throne and before Him stand His servants who are being judged for their works. Ever since the gospel has been preached, whether the time of the first centuries of Christianity, or this day, there have always been faithful and unfaithful preachers. At Judgment the latter tell Christ the Judge what they have done during their ministry. They "prophesied," that is, they taught publicly in His name; acknowledging Him to be the Saviour, and proclaiming Him and His truth to others. They "cast out demons," they had done miracles, being assisted by supernatural power to do marvelous works, and thus prove the truth of the doctrine they preached. But Jesus says, Depart! I never knew you. I never approved of you. They preached His truth, it is true, and God blessed it because of His love for the souls of men and caused His work to prosper, but He did not approve of those who did the work because they held the truth in unrighteousness. They were unholy in their hearts and unrighteous in their conduct. How many there have been and are, who appear prophets in their pulpits; how many writers, and other workers, the miracles of whose labor, learning, and doctrine we admire, but they themselves are nothing before God, because they perform not His will but their own. It is sad that men of gifts and talents should be only way-marks or finger-posts in the way to eternal bliss, pointing out the road to others, without walking in it themselves!

Gems of Life for Youth

COURAGE

"Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord" (Psalm 31:24).

COURAGE consists not in hazarding without fear, but being resolutely minded in a just cause. The brave man is not he who feels no fear, but he whose noble soul subdues its fears, and bravely dares the danger nature shrinks from. True courage is cool and calm. The bravest of men have the least of the brutal, bullying insolence, and in the very time of danger are found the most serene and free. Rage can make a coward forget himself and fight. But what is done in fury or anger can never be placed to the account of courage.

The greater part of the courage that is needed in the world is not the heroic kind. There is need for the common courage to be honest, the courage to resist temptation, the courage to speak the truth, the courage to be what we really are, and not to pretend to be what we are not, the courage to live honestly within our own means, and not dishonestly with the means of others. The courage that dares to display itself in silent effort and endeavor, that dares to endure all and suffer all for truth and duty, is more truly heroic than the achievements of physical valor, which are rewarded by honors and titles, or by laurels, sometimes steeped in blood. It is moral courage that characterizes the highest order of manhood and womanhood. A man must have the courage to be himself, and not the shadow or echo of another. He must exercise his own powers, think for himself, and learn to courageously let evidence alone sway his convictions. Men admire others who have the courage to stand for their convictions, and God wants men who are convinced in their heart and stand for their convictions. He wants men who have the convictions because they believe and have thought His words and principles through for themselves, and not because of fear and submission to others.

It has been said that he who *dares* not form an opinion must be a coward; he who *will* not must be an idler; he who *cannot* must be a fool.

For preparedness every true Christian must have courage. Victory has been promised to all who will overcome; to overcome requires courage. Without courage one cannot achieve anything great. Courage will follow duty anywhere. Courage is patient; it can wait, it can endure, it lies deep in the heart of every true victor. Courage draws our will and faculties together; it focuses

them, eliminating all else save the one great thing of the moment. It is that part of us that not only resolves and does, but continues to do and to persevere. It is more than bravery. All fighters are brave with a physical bravery, but they may be utterly lacking in courage to champion and stand for the things they know to be right. Everywhere there are people who feel that the odds are against them, that difficulties in the way are insurmountable, that further efforts to conquer are useless, whether facing some domestic calamity or financial misfortune, or struggling with innumerable trivialities.

The highest courage is impossible without self-conquest. A writer has well said, "A man may be a marvel in physical courage, yet a coward in matters of self-government." Alexander the Great conquered all the world that he knew, but he let his lower nature conquer his better self. Though he gained for himself a great name and the highest honor obtainable at that time, yet he died a disappointed and defeated man.

All through the ages, provisions have been made by the Inspirer of men for all who will strive against evil in the fear of God. Through a careful study of Scripture much can be drawn from natural occurrences that is of great spiritual value to all who will enter into a vigorous campaign for self-improvement.

The passive endurance of the man or woman who for conscience' sake is found ready to suffer and endure in solitude, without so much as the encouragement of even a single sympathizing voice, is an exhibition of courage of a far higher kind than that displayed in the roar of battle, where even the weakest feels encouraged and inspired by the enthusiasm of sympathy and the power of numbers. Time would fail to tell of the names of those who through faith in principles, have fought a good fight in the moral warfare of the world, and been content to lay down their lives rather than prove false to their conscientious convictions of the truth.

Struggle with adverse circumstances, as with habits, appetites or passions, all require as much courage and more perseverance than the brief encounter of battle. Enough to contend with and overcome lies in the pathway of every individual. Every one may be sure of finding enough through life, plenty of difficulties of either one kind or another. To struggle and again and again to renew the conflict—this is life's inheritance. He who never falters, no matter how adverse may be the circumstances, always enjoys the consciousness of perpetual, spiritual trial of which nothing can deprive him.